

**St. John Fisher Pastoral Council Meeting  
January 6, 2021 – Zoom Meeting**

**Present:** Msgr. David A. Sork, Chris Ratliff (chair), Joe Arroyo (vice chair), Cathy Alessandra, Janos Bakos, Dana Hargrave, Antonia Lavender, Joe McGuinness, Dave Williams, Chiby Onyeador (youth rep), Maddy Magaña (youth alt.), and Gayle Plecha.

**Absent:** Sheila Bloodgood, Steve Izuno, and Anne-Marie Hudani as the staff representative

**Guest(s):** Bev Fink

Msgr. Sork opened the meeting at 7:01 pm and welcomed the guest.

The Council prayed the First 15 led by Dana Hargrave.

**Pastor-Parish Life (Msgr. Sork)**

**Feedback**

- **The Immaculate Conception Holy Day Mass**  
No feedback.
- **Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass – Livestream**  
Chiby Onyeador livestreamed this Mass on 12/12/20. He felt it went really well with no technical difficulties and the Mass was really good.
- **Simbang Gabi – Livestream Mass & Outside TV**  
Antonia Lavender watched the Livestream Mass on 12/20/20 at 9:00 am but did not participate outside afterwards. This was her first time seeing this special occasion. Msgr. Sork said traditionally it's celebrated at the Saturday 5:00 pm Mass, but the committee wanted it to be seen on the livestream this year. He thinks about 140 people came for communion afterwards, but he doesn't know how many watched it on the TV screen outside.
- **Christmas Adopt-a-Family Program**  
Margaret Johnson coordinated this event with Sagrado Corazon Church in Cudahy. Dana Hargrave participated this year and feels it's a great program. Sagrado Corazon and the gift recipients were very appreciative of all the gifts they received from SJF.
- **Giving Tree**  
Msgr. Sork said Frank Lee told him they received more gifts than in previous years. The charities were quite pleased with the generosity of SJF parishioners.
- **Christmas Eve and Day Masses – crowd control**  
Msgr. Sork thanked Sheila Bloodgood for the flowchart and PowerPoint she created and felt it was helpful to all involved in distributing communion. He also thanked the members of Pastoral Council who came to help at the Masses. Dana Hargrave felt the 9:00 am had less attendance than usual. Joe McGuinness felt it was well prepared and the seating was good. The flowchart was absolutely necessary for crowd control. Antonia Lavender felt

the 4:00 pm Mass was less attended than anticipated. Dave Williams thought the weather kept people away. Janos Bakos attended the 8:00 pm on Christmas Eve and thought everything went smoothly, and he enjoyed the experience.

Msgr. Sork reminded everyone that Mass was moved outside in July due to the spike in COVID-19 cases. There was a court case that had implications in L.A. County when the court ruled that church attendance restrictions were arbitrary. Because of that, the county said the churches could be opened to celebrate Mass inside if social distancing and other safety measures were observed. Up to that point, SJF had not reopened the church. A week ago (Monday, December 28, at the 5:15 pm Mass) it was raining very heavily and was so windy that the facilities staff couldn't keep the chairs dry. Based on those reasons Msgr. Sork moved the parishioners inside. The next morning for the 8:15 am livestream Mass, he left the church open, allowing people to come in. Everyone wore masks and kept the required social distance. He continued doing that at both the am and pm daily Masses. Those who watch it on Livestream can now come into the church to receive communion. About 30 people attend the 8:00 am Masses with about 15 more coming inside to receive communion. The 5:15 pm Masses have about 50 people attending in person. It is easier to sit socially distanced inside the church than outside. He hasn't decided yet about officially reopening the church but had asked for input from the Liturgy Committee and Pastoral Staff. The Liturgy Committee didn't think Sunday morning Masses should be inside, but Saturday and Sunday 5:00 pm Masses could be inside again. Most of Pastoral Staff felt he went too far by reopening the church. They felt all Masses should remain outside, considering there is another spike in L.A. County, and it's just too big of a risk at this time. Msgr. Sork asked for input from each Pastoral Council member on whether to move Mass back inside the church or keep it outside.

- Dana Hargrave stated that there is more control over social distancing inside the church with cones separating the pews. She feels it's safer inside the church but questions whether it's safe enough. She doesn't want to propagate the virus at the Masses.
- Chris Ratliff attended many livestream Masses in person and is delighted the church is open. Everyone seemed well disciplined with mask wearing and distancing themselves. He felt very secure with the small group that was inside the church. Since no one is required to attend Mass at this time, it limits the crowds.
- Cathy Alessandra has not been and won't be back to the church inside. With the surge in cases, she feels that it is not the right time yet.
- Antonia Lavender said some SJF parishioners are going to St. Lawrence now because the chairs are too close together at the SJF outside Masses. She feels it's rough to be outside and she agrees that it's good to bring people inside. If you desire to attend Mass outside, you can sit wherever you want. SJF has done an outstanding job at providing space for parishioners.
- Joe Arroyo agrees that moving inside is safer except at the 11:00 am Sunday Mass. The chairs outside are not 6-feet apart. When people move the chairs, they lose control over the configuration.
- Joe McGuinness agrees that the chairs are too close. The ushers can police the arrangement of the chairs. He suggests keeping the numbers low if they open the church. He is concerned if the number reaches 100, it invites too much crowding.
- Gayle Plecha added that when the church was reopened briefly, all volunteers had to go through the COVID-19 training. Now many of them are opting out due to illness or the

spike in cases. More volunteers will need to be trained. She added that having the staff to sanitize the church between Masses is a huge factor in whether the church can be open.

- Dave Williams said he stopped ushering inside because people weren't wearing masks. He now sits outside behind the priest where he can maintain social distancing. He would be reluctant to go inside unless everyone followed the protocol.
- Janos Bakos has no problem going back inside the church. At the outside Mass most people sit only three feet from him. Inside the church it's easier to know if people are sitting too close together and control the six-foot distance.
- Maddy Magaña feels if there are less than 100 participants, everyone wears masks and maintains social distancing, then it would be okay inside the church.
- Chiby Onyeador was not able to comment due to a dropped Zoom connection.
- Chris Ratliff added that there is an opportunity for hybrid with inside Mass and livestream. Simbang Gabi had the outside TV screen so perhaps that could be done for those who feel there are too many people inside the church.
- Dana Hargrave added that there could be 40 people in the church and 40 in the gym for overflow.

Msgr. Sork asked for clarification on how the virus spreads in a large church when people are wearing masks. Chris Ratliff said the mask is not 100% effective and people are touching the surfaces and touching their faces. Mass outdoors has better air circulation which reduces the risk. Dana Hargrave feels it's spread by aerosol contamination not touching contaminated areas. Antonia Lavender is concerned that the more "normal" the circumstances feel, the more people will gather. They need to be careful to avoid causing an inspector to come and deem the guidelines are not being followed and shut it down. Msgr. Sork said he will decide what to do in the next day or two. He confirmed that there is more control inside than outside but neither option has zero risk. Each person must make the choice on how much risk they are willing to take. It's a difficult decision and there are hard feelings on both sides. He wants to do the best thing and will pray over it.

### **Looking Ahead**

- **COVID-19 restrictions**

Chris Ratliff said when the agenda was created before Christmas this was an opportunity for Msgr. Sork and Gayle Plecha to add any changes. Since then, there has been a huge spike and now the virus is running rampant and includes another strain that is worse, so Zoom meetings must continue.

- **SJF Lenten Retreat – March 14-16**

This is the parish mission. The presenter is a priest from New Camaldoli Hermitage in Big Sur. The plan is to have the event inside the church and also livestreamed. This one is geared to the adults not the youth. It will be inspiring. Msgr. Sork encouraged Pastoral Council to attend.

### **Update on California Bishops' Anti-Racism Initiative**

Msgr. Sork received the following information at the Council of Priests. There was a Zoom meeting with four of the Black bishops, including Bishop Bennett, speaking on their own experiences. It was very, very moving. Each bishop had a different perspective. There was a second meeting with a Black priest and three Black Catholic leaders. Again the bishops were moved and overwhelmed. Archbishop Gomez wants to get it spread out to the priests. Chiby

Onyeador didn't have any questions at this time but said he hasn't been able to find any new information since September. If Msgr. Sork learns anything more, he will let the Pastoral Council know about it.

## **Chair/Vice-Chair**

### **Approval of December Minutes**

The chair asked for corrections to the December minutes. There is a factual error on page 3. For Staff Rep Brief Katie Dante, correct to "Confirmation and Youth Ministry Update". Dave Williams moved to approve the December minutes as amended. Joe Arroyo seconded. The minutes as amended were approved.

### **Staff rep brief: Anne-Marie Hudani – SJF School Update**

Not present due to illness. The chair hopes to reschedule her to attend another meeting. He thought the SJF school had a wonderful Christmas donation program and wanted to hear her report of its success.

### **2020 – 2021 Pastoral Plan Objectives Review**

The chair asked one member from each team to give an update on their objective. He received an update from Sheila Bloodgood and Antonia Lavender after the spreadsheet was sent out. Those updates will be included in the minutes.

*Objective #1 – We will develop live and virtual opportunities to interact, worship and retreat with emphasis on the vulnerable and disenfranchised of our community.* Cathy Alessandra reported that the Communications Advisory Committee will meet on 1/11/21 and then her group will meet to discuss the virtual retreat.

*Objective #2 – We will use what we have learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to further our community bond.* Dave Williams doesn't have any updates, but if Mass is moved indoors, he expects to have some. For now, he wants to hold off to see how things progress.

*Objective #3 – We will enhance youth and young adult engagement by contributing to and supporting the creation of online resources.* Maddy Magaña and Antonia Lavender met with Zack Zuvich. Unfortunately, the XLT event was canceled because of COVID-19 as the doctor felt it was not a safe event for the parish at the time. Maddy Magaña said it's been a tough time with school. She feels she's on her computer 12 hours a day. Zack Zuvich wants to have a game night for the youth to meet to get their minds off what's happening in the world. This way he can gain some trust and increase participation. It's a way to get people excited about coming back to events. Antonia Lavender said they had discussed having share groups and Bible studies, but the kids are tired of being talked to through a computer. The goal is to bring kids of the same value system together. Chiby Onyeador wasn't able to make the meeting, but said his sister wishes there were in-person events and she's sorry there won't be any retreats. When things open up, hopefully there will be more opportunities.

*Objective #4 – We will assess the health of SJF ministries and lend assistance where needed, emphasizing impact of COVID-19 and current social issues.* Dana Hargrave said they wrapped up their survey on non-staff ministries. Hundreds of people are involved in the ministries. It was a good survey with good responses, and they were able to make some metrics and learned a lot. Many of the ministries need volunteers and more publicity. The response has been

successful when the ministry leaders promote their ministries at the Masses. Despite COVID-19, most have been able to hang in there. She would like to get the older generation up to speed on Zoom so they can have meetings again. Chris Ratliff said whenever Misty Jesse receives a query about a particular ministry, she always directs the person to the correct ministry leader. He suggested that the group may want to schedule an appointment to meet with her.

### **PC Nominating Committee**

The chair said per the Guidelines they are to stand up the Pastoral Council nominating committee in January. He is tasked with choosing at least two members for the ad-hoc committee. This year Cathy Alessandra, Dana Hargrave, and Dave Williams will be on the committee. Msgr. Sork confirmed that he chose Gayle Plecha as the staff contact for scheduling bulletin and pulpit announcements. The chair said he sent the Guidelines to the committee and pulled last year's bulletin and pulpit announcements. The Pastoral Staff is ready to support the committee. Let the chair know when and how they meet so he can participate as well. There will be three vacancies and a youth rep position to fill. They want to have selectivity, so the more nominees, the better. A good place to start is to go to those who weren't elected last time. They are usually eager to serve. Gayle Plecha added that Janos Bakos and Sheila Bloodgood are finishing their first term. Please confirm if they want to stand for re-election. Janos Bakos affirmed that he would like to stand for re-election.

### **Next Meeting: February 3 at 7:00 pm**

The February 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting will take place at 7:00 pm. Plan to attend via Zoom.

### **Other**

Joe Arroyo read the guidelines for Pastoral Council members to bring concerns and affirmations to the attention of the pastor.

- Antonia Lavender announced the A-Men and A-Women's Prayer Group will be meeting again every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month. They will update that in the bulletin.
- Dave Williams clarified that SJF stepped down as a host church for Family Promise of the South Bay. SJF was scheduled to host families in January, July, and September of 2021, so they honored their financial commitment of donating money. If the organization goes back to physical hosting, SJF will not participate. Msgr. Sork is very grateful to Dave and Yolanda Williams for all the work they did to keep it going.

The meeting concluded at 8:26 pm with the prayer of St. John Fisher Parish.